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threat despite drought

In the middle of a drought, property damage because of runoff is an unlikely occurrence, but recent rains have created a concern for residents and property owners in the Air Village Hills area.

Tuesday Paul B. Baker and Doug Jensen, from the Mined Land Reclamation Program with the Utah Department of Natural Resources, did an on-site inspection of the Uintah County asphalt pit, southwest of Vernal, which is now leased by Crown Energy. Through an exchange agreement with Crown Energy, Uintah County still mines 60,000 yards a year of tar sands from the pit to surface county roads.

With permission from the owners, the state officials along with Paul Felch, Uintah County road supervisor; Kelly Boren, Air Village Home Owners Association; Bob Haws, developer and property owner; Joseph Shaffer, TriCounty Health and Lyle McKeachnie, property owner, toured the asphalt pit. On the lower end of the mining operation there were several fenced-in ponds with several feet of water in them. Everett Unruh, Crown Energy, said that all the water in the ponds had come from the recent rains. In one of the ponds there were several dead animals.

"What we would like done is to have a dam built which would prevent homes in the subdivision for being damaged by the runoff," said McKeachnie. Also McKeachnie said there should be a plan in place for reclamation of the mine. The plan should include deadlines for phases of the reclamation to be completed.

Bob Haws said the county needs to install a culvert to prevent runoff water from the Crown Energy property from going onto his property and cutting a ravine along its frontage with the access



Inspectors look at runoff from the asphalt mine.

road. The water flows across a 100-foot section of county road before going down the ravine.

"In the past year the ravine has become about a foot deeper," Haws said.

Baker said that the water would have to go somewhere if it is diverted from going onto Haws' property. Haws said the the flooding normally only occurs once or twice a year.

Paul Felch agreed that a culvert should be placed under the road.

McKeachnie, who used to herd sheep in the area, said that the day will come when there will be a 100-year storm and precautions need to be taken to prevent that storm from damaging nearby homes.

"When Crown began its operation they promised that reclamation would be done," said Kelly Boren. "Now the mine has tripled in size and nothing has been done."

Baker said he would be interested in the minutes of the meeting where the company made the promise to reclaim the mining operation. Baker said he would need to do more study before addressing the complaints brought by the property owners.

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VERNAL
EXPRESS
OCT 9, 2002

Runoff is a treat despite the drought

Ocotober 9, 2002

Please file
M/047/032 & M/047/022

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